Tenskwatawa(1768-1834) The Indian Prophet

*Greatest Visionariesof the 19th century:*

The 19th century, with the industrial revolution and many ne inventions and ideas, was a very productive century. Also, there were many visionaries fighting for cause they believed in. But the greatest visionary of this century was from our great country, America. The name of this great visionary was Tenskwatawa(1768-1834), the great **Indian Prophet**, preaching his ideas to rid the white men. While there were many indian prophets that encouraged the native to be **anti-colonialist** and take back america, they were not as successful. In 1680 Popé of the Pueblo Indians chased the spanish missionaries, soldiers, and settlers out of New Mexico, but they only were successful for a dozen years. Tenskwatawa with the Shawnee Indians united many tribes and created a force that could contend with U.S. army. That’s why Tenskwatawa was by far the most successful visionary of this century.

At the beginning of his life Tenskwatawa wasn’t even named Tenskwatawa. He was named Lalawethika, which meant “he who makes a loud noise” or

“noise maker/.” His father died before he was born, and his mother left his family shortly after, so he grew up with no family other then his siblings who for the most part ignored him. In the first 20 years of his life he failed as a hunter and as a medicine man. His only accomplishment was that he blinded himself in oen eye. Ten one day Tenskwatawa was put in a deep trance by the Master of Life, and received the first of his many visioans that he would preach to the shawnee and many other indian tribes. In his visions the Great Good Spirit told him what to do. According to Tenskwatawa this is what he said, “No red man must ever drink liqour or he will go and have the hot lead poured in his mouth. Do not eat any food that is raised or cooked by a white person. Eat not their bread made of wheat… The great good spirti wants our men to hunt and kill game as in the ancient days, with the silent arrow and the lance and the snare and no longer with guns.” If everyone followed these things Tenskwataw believed that the people would **purify** themselves of all the things that destroyed the Indian’s nation, and then he could create a **Pan-Indian confederacy.** With his visions he attempted to make all the indians go back to their traditional ways.

As Tenskwatawa grew in popularity with the Shawnee Indians he got help from his brother Tecumseh who helped spread his ideas through out the Ohio River Valley. As they gained numbers, the U.S. government started to get concerned. To delegitimize Tenskwatawa, William Hentry Harrison challenged him to stop the sun, but Tenskwatawa decided to do even better. Having learned about an upcoming solar eclisp from astronomers, he gathered all his followerws and he told the sky to darken and is if on his command it darkened. After that the number of his followers skyrocketed.



After that the U.S. got really scared that he might accomplish his dream of a Pan-Indian Confederacy. The U.S. did what they thought was their last option. When Tecumseh was away spreadin the vision of Tenskwatawa, the U.S. Army attacked Tenskwatawa and all of his followers. **The Battle of Tippecanoe** was long and bloody. Tneskwatawa had so many followers that the fight was pretty even for a while, but eventually the Indians gave ground and lost. After The Battle of Tippecanoe, many of Tenskwatawa’s followers lost fait in him because he had preached that they could not be attacked by the white man because the Great Spirit would stop them. After being defeated at Tippecanoe Tenskwatawa fled to Canada.

There were many other Indian Prophets after Tenskwatawa, but he was by far the most successful. As a visionary he spread his vision so far that he had a following that could compete with the U.S. Army. Even though his uprising didn’t succeed in halting the U.S.’s expansion, his uprising showed that everyone can accomplish great things, and that’s why Tenskwatawa was the greatest visionary of the 19th century.

By Scott Renshaw